

turies from the Fifth to the Fifteenth—this fiction has been so long and so persistently dinned into our ears, that even we who belong to the dominant organization of that time, have come to believe it. Surely De Maistre was right when he exclaimed that for three centuries history has been a conspiracy against the truth. And the most pathetic feature of it all is that those against whom the conspiracy was formed are oftentimes the readiest to fall in with it.

The dawn of the Thirteenth Century saw the beginning of the decline of that system of graduated government, called feudalism, a system which had tided Europe over the most critical period of all her existence and at the same time prepared the way for the organization of more permanent central government. Feudalism had accomplished its colossal work as no other agent conceivable by the human mind could have done. Like all human institutions that have served the purpose of their excellence, feudalism began to disappear. But in passing away, it left a marvellously rich inheritance, an inheritance that was shared by a centralized monarchy on the one hand and a resolute people on the other. What this inheritance was, we shall best perceive by seeing what feudalism was in its essence.

When the savage hordes from the North swept down like torrents upon Rome during the Fifth Century, the church saw herself face to face with the stupendous task of lifting them up from the depth of licentious and ferocious superstition, of taming their untutored nature and implanting in them the saving sense of law and order.

Fortunately, Providence raised up popes like Leo the Great and Gregory the Great, who were able to cope with this herculean task, until there came to lighten their labor towards the end of the Eighth Century, that almost superhuman genius Charlemagne. Charlemagne succeeded in marshalling the various tribes of Central and Western Europe and gave them a form of civil government and organized society. As a result of his administration, there arose the system of government called feudalism. In these latter days much has been said in condemnation of feudalism. Yet when one studies impartially the history of the years between 800 and 1200, he is constrained to admit that it was the only system adapted to save Europe from anarchy and barbarism. Feudalism was an hierarchical organization of society. To each man was assigned his due place and rank. The rights and duties of each were clearly and unmistakably prescribed. With every privilege there was associated a duty. The

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